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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Monday, August 31, 1936.

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Hello folks. Clear skies greeted the residents of Washington this morning ending a period of thunderstorms and heavy rains. Whatever may have been the moisture conditions of our soils in this section there is now plenty of moisture and the conditions are ideal for the preparation of the land and the seeding or planting of fall crops. It is still too early for the transplanting of fruit trees or any shrubbery that sheds its leaves after frost, but now is a good time to plant evergreens and to transplant peonies and other perennial plants.

No doubt many of you folks who live in the sections that have suffered so greatly from the drought this season have lost some of your ornamental plantings about your homes and will make replacements. Sometimes it is a good plan to give the shrubbery and ornamental plantings a complete overhauling. Some of them may have grown too large or may be too crowded and need resetting. Where the plantings are of a mixed nature, that is containing deciduous shrubs or those that shed their leaves, and also evergreens it may be necessary to wait until a little later to make the changes but it is always desirable to move evergreens before cold weather. I have found that where you are moving evergreens late in the fall that it is desirable to move a somewhat larger ball of earth around their roots than when they are moved say in early September.

Let me give you this suggestion about digging an evergreen to move it. Always turn the back of your spade or shovel toward the plant and dig the soil away from the plant leaving a neat, smooth ball of earth around its roots. By the ordinary method of digging, that is simply thrusting the point of the shovel or spade under the root of the plant and prying it loose, you will get very little soil around its roots. That method is all right for digging dormant fruit trees from the nursery but not so for delicate shrubs that will not stand to have their main root system exposed. By turning the back of the spade or shovel toward the plant you simply work the tool with your hands, cutting away a little of the soil at each stroke and leaving a nice smooth ball of earth around the roots. As you go deeper you turn the point of your spade or shovel inward so as to undermine the plant until finally a piece of burlap can be slipped under the ball of earth and tied around it to hold it from breaking up during the moving. In this condition the plant can be lifted and carried anywhere.

September is the month for moving and dividing peonies. Where peonies have been in one place for a long time their roots become too thick and certain root diseases are liable to get into them. When the peonies get into this condition they should be dug, the roots divided and transplanted to a new location where they may get plenty of sunlight.

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In dividing the peony roots cut them apart carefully following the natural lines of division. If the old roots are very large the central portion may be discarded, using only the outer or new roots for transplanting. In case there are any darkened or decayed spots on the roots carefully carve these out by means of a sharp knife.

Peonies will grow in any good loam soil but they must have good drainage and it is desirable to dig the holes 18 to 24 inches deep and refill them with good soil. About a pint of bone meal should be mixed with the soil of each hole but no manure should be used. Another point is to firm the soil in the holes so that it will not settle. The reason for this is that in planting the peony roots the buds should be exactly 2 inches below the surface. A great many of the failures of peonies to bloom are due to deep planting and 2 inches below the natural surface has been found to be the best depth.

It will soon be time for planting bulbs for blooming next spring and it is a good idea to decide where you are going to plant your bulbs then as the ground becomes vacant you can spade it up, work in some all-round fertilizer and be all ready for planting the bulbs. Jonquils, paper-white narcissus, tulips, crocus and hyacinths can all be planted in the open for spring blooming and the latter part of September or the first week in October is a good time to do the planting. Deep preparation of the soil is essential and the bulbs should be gotten into the ground in plenty of time so that they will make a good root growth before the ground freezes. The bulbs will be on sale in the stores now in two or three weeks. Where you have annuals or some other flowering plants on the ground where you intend to plant your bulbs have everything ready and then when frost kills the annuals or they become seedy rip them out, spade up the ground and plant your bulbs immediately, but where the ground is not now occupied I would suggest getting it ready for the bulbs within the next week or ten days.

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